

"I am deeply troubled by some of the funding decisions contained in this bill. The two worst examples are the decimating of funding for almost every FEMA grant program and the cutting of research funding for the Science and Technology Directorate by more than half."

Media Contact: Andrew High

Friday, May 13, 2011

202-225-1784, andrew.high@mail.house.gov

Opening Statement of Ranking Member David Price

Subcommittee Markup of the FY2012 DHS Appropriations Bill

May 13, 2011

Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate you on beginning the markup process for your first bill as Homeland Security Appropriations Chairman and echo your accolades for our professional and personal staffs. As you have already stated, the mark before us provides \$40.592 billion, funding the Department of Homeland Security at roughly the 2009 level, a 6.8 percent decrease below the President's request and more than \$1 billion less than current year funding. You have certainly had to make some tough decisions this year with your allocation.

Let me start by applauding you and your staff for working to retain adequate funding for the front line employees of the Department of Homeland Security, so that they can continue to conduct critical operations along our borders, protect our nation's airports and seaports, and respond to the spate of natural disasters our country has experienced this spring.

The bill also addresses weaknesses in aviation and maritime cargo security efforts, permits the hiring of additional CBP Officers at the ports of entry, and enhances integrity programs for border personnel. It enhances the Department's overseas efforts to better secure our visa processing; it increases Coast Guard personnel for marine safety and environmental response following the Deepwater Horizon disaster; and it provides sufficient resources to better share information among Federal, State and local entities, including at the fusion centers.

That being said, I am deeply troubled by some of the funding decisions contained in this bill. The two worst examples are the decimating of funding for almost every FEMA grant program and the cutting of research funding for the Science and Technology Directorate by more than half. Providing a total of \$1 billion for all State and Local Grants, or 65 percent below the request, breaks faith with the states and localities that depend on us as partners to secure our communities, as does the radical reduction of fire grants. These cuts will be doubly disruptive as many of our states and municipalities are being forced to slash their own budgets. I cannot conceive of any defensible argument for cuts of this magnitude.

This bill also recommends drastic reductions to information technology needs, automation programs, and construction activities, including no funding for the new DHS headquarters already under construction and the related lease consolidation efforts. We have been told repeatedly by the Administration that deferring these investments will ultimately affect front-line operations and cost us more money in the future, and I believe that they are correct.

But the state and local funds are the most serious flaw. These funds equip our state and local partners to be ready for a disaster, so they can mitigate its impact and respond effectively. While this bill rightly seeks to help states and localities rebuild after a disaster strikes, it decimates the work required to prepare for one before it happens. That exposes our communities to greater risk, and it potentially raises the costs of attacks and disasters when they do occur.

While I recognize that the Administration's budget left the Subcommittee some holes to fill, this bill's allocation is the real problem. And that is thanks to a completely unrealistic spending cap

set by the House Republican budget. We're now seeing the real implications of that deeply flawed plan. It simply leaves no room to keep Departmental operations strong while fulfilling our dual responsibility to prepare for and respond to all hazards.

I want to close by reiterating my deep appreciation for the Chairman's efforts to work with us on many issues, and for his valiant efforts to sustain our frontline, federal homeland security operations. At this time I reserve judgment on this bill, and I will work to rectify some of these shortfalls at the Full Committee markup.

#